Picture Imperfect

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Picture Imperfect

by shiphitsthefan

Summary

Will Graham has made a name for himself in the magazine industry for being the one and only alpha photographer that can be trusted. It isn't that he doesn't have hormonal urges; Will is simply able to control himself. In a society run by omegas, Will's empathetic nature is a gift; he can easily assume the omega mindset, almost as if he shares their biology, their behavior. Omegas feel safe with Will, because he isn't innately predatorial.

He's just walked into a photo shoot with concert harpsichordist Hannibal Lecter.

He's about to ruin everything.

Notes

Blame the bunch of sinners known as the A/B/O Knitting Circle. We saw an amazing photoset of Mads and all went, "Omega Hannibal!" And then I made my descent into hell from there.

Filth starts in the third chapter, because I know you're here for the filth. <3

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Will Graham has made a name for himself in the magazine industry for being the one and only alpha photographer that can be trusted. It isn't that he doesn't have hormonal urges; Will is simply able to control himself. He isn't one of the hot-headed, hot-blooded, half-cocked and fully-knotted basic alpha boys that are so despised by betas and omegas alike. In fact, he's one of the few likeable alphas period in the high-class culture of a post-alphriarchal world.

It's his gift, Will's been told by every medical professional that matters, his empathetic nature. In a society run by omegas, Will can easily assume their mindset, almost as if he shares their biology, their behavior. The very same disorder also allows him to capture more realistic, moving photographs. He's won awards and prestige, though none of that really matters to Will. The art is what's truly important, as well as distinguishing himself from the pack mentality.

There have even been omegist publications and collegiate departments that have invited Will to help document the mystery of heat. Omegas feel safe with him, because he isn't innately predatorial. Conversely, Will feels safer among them--not so much with betas; they ask too many questions. But with omegas, Will doesn't have to posture and preen, which is good, because he isn't particularly adept at either of them.

Will Graham's life is beyond ideal. Quiet; pleasing; comfortable.

He's about to ruin everything.

If there is fault to place beyond his own suddenly-horrible luck, Will would lay it squarely on Alana Bloom's shoulders. She's a solid agent, a beta, but Alana has mostly respected his boundaries and dislike of conversation. Furthermore, Alana is responsible for many of his most-successful bookings.

Will supposes he could blame the feature editor for *Voga,* Jack Crawford. Another beta, he changed from friendly to intrusive to absolutely intolerable every time he opened his mouth, which was unfortunately often. It was typical behavior for a beta, of course, but Will found Crawford especially irritating. He never knew exactly where he stood with Jack, which was why he typically turned down his offers.

Honestly, Will still doesn't understand why he accepted this shoot. He hates trying to photograph musicians; they're impossible to pose, at least for Will, and he doesn't expect the so-called Yo-Yo Ma of harpsichords to be any different.

And then, Will walks into the room, backpack slung over one shoulder and an equipment bag over the other, prop in hand, and sees Hannibal Lecter for the first time.

This is it, he thinks. *This is my undoing. This is how I destroy my career.*

Lecter's standing there in the middle of the empty practice room like he owns the floor. The walls are a neutral gray-green, and the carpet's an oddly-muted plum, and the only focal point is Lecter. Which, while exactly what Will wanted and why he had scouted this specific location, has created a unique problem.

Will has never--ever, not once in hundreds of photoshoots--been so wholly distracted by his subject. He hasn't even seen his *face* yet, and God help Will when he does. His pheromones are flowing, and he's taking very deep, very quiet breaths. *Wade into the stream,* Will tells himself. *Pretend you're fishing. Be the lure. Calm down your fucking cock and concentrate, Graham.*

"Dr. Hannibal Lecter?" Will knows full well that he is, but it's the only words his mouth will currently make.

"Your aftershave is atrocious, Mr. Graham."

The insult doesn't faze Will. It's hardly the first time an omega's talked down to him, though he had hoped for a more pleasant session. Chalking it up to pompous, pretentious musicians, he sets down the chair, and then his bags.

"Thank you," says Will. "I find it easier to keep things professional." Not that he'll have any problem doing so now.

Of course, Lecter picks that exact moment to turn around. Will hears a sharp intake of breath, and unfortunately looks up and right into his eyes. They're beautiful, though the color is hard to pin down. Then again, Will's heard that about his own.

"An effective strategy," he replies. "I did not expect you to be so mismatched to your scent."

"Most don't." Will has been told time and again that he is curt and rude, but he's too goddamn captivated by Lecter to care about faking social grace. His hair is cut short, fine and silver and smooth. Lecter's surprisingly scruffy, yet somehow still soft. Will had requested that he not wear what was purported to be his typical attire--a three-piece suit, usually plaid, always tailored. Another signature technique of his, to draw the eye to the real person instead of the artificial.

So here stands concert harpsichordist and musical genius Hannibal Lecter in a button-down shirt, tails untucked. He has on a suit jacket, but it's a textured blue. His jeans have a series of useless seams across the knees, and his shoes...Will knows nothing about fashion, but he's certain those shoes don't belong anywhere near the pages of *Voga.*

"Thank you for following my instructions," Will praises. His eyes widen as Lecter's do, both realizing Will's unintentional display of dominance. "I apologize, Dr. Lec--"

"Hannibal," who looks like he's been caught for the first time, seen and discovered. "Please, call me Hannibal."

Will swallows and does his best to ignore his baser instinct to claim and conquer, to make Hannibal beg instead of request. He's disgusted with himself, but it does nothing to quell his

arousal. “I’m sorry, Hannibal. This hasn’t happened to me before.”

“Your restraint is well-regarded,” Hannibal says. “Legendary, even. I remain impressed by your control.”

“I certainly don’t feel in control,” admits Will. “More like lost at sea. Adrift.”

Hannibal licks his lips. “I must confess that I feel the same.”

Closing his eyes, Will tries to collect himself. “I didn’t think this happened anymore.”

“True mates?”

“Yes.”

“One should never discount myth,” says Hannibal. “Every nursery tale bears a hidden truth.”

“Are we the moral to the story, Hannibal?” Will can’t help but smile, though he doesn’t dare open his eyes to see if Hannibal returns it.

“It is hardly impossible.” There’s the slightest tremor to Hannibal’s voice; nothing else gives away his state. “I am uncertain as to how to proceed.”

Will makes another mistake, inhaling through his nose. Even from across the room, Hannibal smells sweet--cedarwood and orange, vetiver and verbena. It would be so easy to give in, to go to him, to scent Hannibal’s neck and taste the heat of his pulse and *fucking ravish him and--*

He shakes his head in a fruitless attempt to clear it, to quell the hormones rushing through him. He breathes in again--through his mouth this time, though now he swears that he can almost taste it, taste *him,* and oh *God*-- and pictures the session step by step in his mind, borrowing from his previous and most successful shoots.

“I will not ruin us,” he finally says, as steadily as he can manage.

Hannibal asks, “What would you propose?”

“We continue as intended,” begins Will. “We stay apart and refrain from touching. And then we leave just as we came: alone.” Even thinking about separation was painful, and saying it more so. “Trust me, Hannibal; if I could, I would take you here, bond with you, mate with you.”

He forces his eyes open; Hannibal looks much less stoic than he did when Will arrived. It satisfies something primal in Will--a sense of *I did that; this undoing was mine.*

“But we both know what would happen,” Will continues. “You would lose your prestige and standing, your respect. Others would see you as debased, as nothing more than a stereotype hard fought to move past. Still, your career would likely remain intact, Hannibal; mine would not.”

“I refuse to separate you from your gift,” says Hannibal, and it takes Will by surprise. Hannibal smiles, small and silent, a mere slip of the mask. “Jack requested you because *I* requested you, Will, though I had hoped to keep our meeting professional, as well. Your work is…” He blinks quickly--once, twice. “I made a study of your portfolio. It’s quite extraordinary.”

Will clutches the back of the old, scuffed-up chair; for a moment, he worries about breaking the wood. He’s a heartbeat away from preening like a peacock. “You make it sound as if I have already courted you. Surely you aren’t a traditional, old world omega?” He doesn’t know how he’s managing to tease him; Will’s barely holding himself together as it is.

Hannibal’s nostrils flare; Will hadn’t noticed before, but Hannibal’s hands are reflexively clasped behind his back. He hopes his appreciation of the stance doesn’t signal his own mated preferences. Will would hate to be one of *those* alphas.

“And if I were?”

Alright, perhaps being a dominating alpha wouldn’t be so bad, after all.

“While I am enjoying our conversation, this is hardly helping us remain sensible.” And then Hannibal smirks, lowers his eyelids halfway, and says, “I can kneel for you later.”

There aren’t enough oxygen molecules in the world to resupply Will’s lungs. “I’m going...I’m going to go stand outside for a few minutes.”

“If you think it prudent.”

“Oh, it is definitely prudent.” Will’s hands fidget; he can’t bear looking at Hannibal without jumping him, so Will turns to face the door. “You smell too good. It’s going to kill me.”

Hannibal chuckles. “And here I thought you could handle yourself.”

“I’ve never been overwhelmed with the need to--forgive my crudeness?”

“Absolutely.”

Will steps forward and rests his forehead against the door. His brain feels like it’s on fire. “I want to bury my tongue inside you and lap up every drop until I’m drunk with it.”

There’s harsh muttering; it echoes in Will’s ears.

“I take it you’re okay with that plan.”

“Of course.” Hannibal pauses, but not for long. “You have a very classic figure. Fit for marble. Statuesque.”

That’s a first. “Thank you?”

“The curve of your ass is especially divine. Supple. I would memorize it with my fingertips and palms and mouth, should you allow it.”

Will slows his breathing, wills his heart to stop racing. “I’m going to leave for five minutes,” he says. “When I come back, the chair will be approximately four feet away from the wall. Calm yourself, center, ground. Stretch, if you need to--I haven’t decided how, exactly, you will be posed. Then sit down and wait. I’ll direct you from there.”

Behind him, there’s a barely-audible whimper, and Hannibal’s knees hit the carpeted floor, and Will practically runs from the room to keep both of them from losing their dignity.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> I'm glad everyone is as thirsty as I am for omega Hannibal! Decided to go ahead and update, but it will probably be a couple of days until the next chapter. <3

What followed was seemingly the longest photo shoot of Will's career. In reality, they were together for about an hour, the average length of one of Will's sessions. Keeping each other at not only arm's length but height-of-a-point-guard length was much easier in theory than in practice.

It certainly hadn't helped that Hannibal had been trained, at some point, in dance. His *feet* were even expressive, and they were currently in two-toned leather boots that even Will wouldn't have worn in the days before Alana started dressing him. Still, Hannibal's fashionless choices had the intended effect; he caught the eye more than his clothes.

Posing hadn't improved the situation, though Will hadn't expected it to. What Will was unprepared for was how effortlessly Hannibal moved from composed to relaxed, from polite to seductive. It was easy to direct him into traditionally omegan poses. The only thing saving Will from being accused of catering to the alphan eye was Hannibal's own biological juxtaposition. His most visible features were strongly masculine--Will could easily do an entire study on Hannibal's hands, having become quickly enamored. A second look betrayed his softness, however, the curve of his hips, the plushness of his stomach. Will wanted to caress Hannibal so badly that even his *knot* ached.

The end of the photo shoot was worse. Upon Will's insistence, he and Hannibal would refrain from contact until his concert with the Chamber Music Society, where he would be debuting his new album.

"'Album'? Have you recorded it for phonograph?" Will asked cheekily.

"I would," replied Hannibal, "were it a feasible option."

They were both intensely dismayed to discover that the event was nearly three months away. Will tried to remind himself to be grateful for even receiving an invitation to what promised to be the event of the season. Thank God for his professional standing with Frederick Chilton and his typically-intolerable press room at Lincoln Center.

"I hate this," Will told him, "but it's the only way to save face. We'll run into each other at your concert--"

"--And we will be commended for our restraint," Hannibal finished.

“And I will court you properly,” corrected Will, pleased at Hannibal’s surprise. “You did intimate your preference for tradition.”

“So I did.” He smiled, but it was Will’s face that heated. “Thank you.”

Now, here they stand, staring at each other across the room at an after-party Will finds stuffy at best. Hannibal, on the other hand, is absolutely in his element, as adept in socializing and pleasant conversation as he is at the *Goldberg Variations.* At least, Will assumes that he was talented at playing Bach; he’d never even heard it before being so captivated by Hannibal's playing that he nearly forgot to photograph the event.

Will’s never seen anyone look at him the way Hannibal does. It chokes him, the adoration Will sees in his eyes already. They haven’t even spoken since the shoot--a simple hour in each other’s presence, then nothing. Granted, Hannibal had given Will a glowing review in an interview with Freddie Lounds, speaking not only of his skill and expertise behind the camera, but of Will’s gentility, his relaxed and friendly nature.

Alana had been pestering Will about it ever since. “He must have been photographed by another Will Graham,” she said after reading the article.

He certainly feels like another Will Graham right now. Worse, he’s not sure he’ll be able to hold to his declaration of courtship. All Will can think about right now is getting Hannibal onto the nearest flat surface. At this point, even the harpsichord would do.

There’s a fire in Hannibal’s eyes as he makes his way across to Will that tells him he isn’t alone in that desire.

“Mr. Graham,” Hannibal greets him. His expression is slight, but Will can read slyness in it easily.

He clears his throat. “Dr. Lecter.”

“Please,” and that does positively wicked things to Will’s stomach. “Call me Hannibal.”

“Hannibal, then.” Will stops himself before he reaches to stoke Hannibal’s cheek. The sheer ownership Will is feeling makes him tense.

“It’s alright,” says Hannibal softly. “I feel the same.”

“It’s wrong,” Will insists, averting his eyes. “Reserved for a different era. Typical alphan posturing, hormonally-driven, sick entitlement.”

“Which I welcome, you may recall.”

Will bites his lip. He can picture them together so easily: Hannibal, exerting the public dominance expected of the liberated omega, guiding him through the required social events Will finds so taxing; Will, dominant behind closed doors, following instinct unrestrained. “I do recall,” he murmurs, and wonders if Hannibal knows what he’s thinking now, too.

Hannibal’s mouth twitches. “You have no experience in courting, do you?”

“I’m afraid I lack experience in--” He hesitates. Even Will knows there are some topics that shouldn’t be discussed in public. “I have no idea what I’m doing,” Will admits, “but I do know that you deserve to be courted.”

“Intentions carry much weight. Especially with me.”

“Perhaps I should follow your lead.”

Hannibal leans in as much as he dares. “Only until I may follow yours.” Will’s knees nearly buckle, and Hannibal uses it as an opportunity to assist Will in offering his arm. “Thank you, Will,” says Hannibal, taking Will’s arm. “How very thoughtful of you.”

“Don’t--don’t mention it.”

But Hannibal does more than mention it; he practically shows Will off, introducing him to other musicians. Will is grateful for Hannibal’s verbal cues, for how easy he makes it to give the appearance of being capable of holding a conversation lasting longer than two minutes. Still, when he becomes aware that their photos are being taken, Will freezes up awkwardly.

“Mr. Graham is unfortunately unused to being on the opposite side of the camera,” says Hannibal smoothly, which is apparently satisfactory. Their companions chuckle, but not unkindly, and then they move on.

“You’re really good at this,” Will tells him. Praising comes to him so easily--his tone becomes dominant, but casual. He hardly recognizes his voice.

Hannibal turns his face down ever-so-slightly. It’s all Will can do to keep from placing his hand on the back of his neck, to stroke him, to pet him. He tries to remind himself that Hannibal not only accepts this, but *likes* it, and then has to swallow down the absurd jealousy at Hannibal submitting to anyone else.

“And you mustn’t doubt yourself,” Hannibal replies.

“You’ll have to forgive my decades of internalized shame.”

“Will,” and he turns his eyes to meet Hannibal’s. It’s soothing that, even as an alpha, Will’s the one who has to look up. “You have nothing to be ashamed of.”

“I’ve always tried to be...I don’t like what being an alpha means. I don’t like that omegas wondered when--not if, *when*-- an alpha would attack them. That they felt objectified by us.”

Hannibal’s eyes glisten; his face is soft, like Will remembers from their session. “That isn’t your burden to bear.”

“It’s why I’ve never pursued a relationship.” Beyond embarrassed, he adds, “Not in any form or fashion. Not even for a night.”

“You--” Will’s briefly concerned that Hannibal is going to pass out. “You mean you’ve never--”

Before Will can even reply, Hannibal's walking them over to a more private spot. He's gliding through the party again, nodding politely, offering a few words here and there. On Will's arm, Hannibal's hand is practically shaking, though he's doing an admirable job of hiding it.

They reach an alcove behind a conveniently-placed staircase, and Hannibal pushes Will up against the wall. "You've never knotted an omega before."

Will shakes his head; he hopes his ears aren't turning as red as they feel like they are. "I've never had sex, at all," and now it's Hannibal's knees that are buckling. "It's not that I'm not interested. I'm extremely interested."

"Are you now?" Hannibal sounds dazed.

"I think with my empathy disorder," Will continues, "that I'd be decent in bed," and Hannibal nearly whines, "but I've never been more than off-putting to everyone else."

"I only find you intriguing," says Hannibal. "Unique." He presses up against Will and scents his pulse, and now Will is the one trying not to whine. "Intoxicating."

Will closes his eyes and steadies his breathing. "I never wanted to succumb to my baser urges," he explains, "and then I found an excellent career and a way to pretend I was a 'good' alpha, whatever *that* means, and--"

"You are returning with me to my rooms," says Hannibal, face still buried against Will's neck. "I am taking you back to my hotel--don't object," and Will shuts his mouth, "and we are going to stay there until you develop a greater acceptance of your sexuality."

"That might take a while," Will says, prying Hannibal's fingers from his jacket lapel. He brings them to his lips, kisses each tip one by one.

Hannibal sighs against Will's skin. "I certainly hope so."

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

And now, the porn.

They take every precaution, use the utmost care. Will lets Hannibal escort him around for another forty-five minutes; it feels even longer than the photo shoot had. Hannibal has his practiced high society face on, and Will always looks half-constipated, so no one is the wiser. Meanwhile, Will's cock threatens to revolt against the waistband of his pants.

He walks Hannibal to his car and refrains from pushing him up against it. Hannibal whispers his room number in Will's ear, and Will nearly growls. Watching Hannibal's Bentley pull out of the parking lot is almost painful. He's never been happier to be on rut suppressants; every muscle in his body twitches and aches.

As per the plan, Will returns to the party and manages to hold a stilted conversation with Frederick. He asks Will about his intentions with Hannibal--goddamn betas and their gossip--and Will is blunt. Frederick smiles, which makes Will's erection disappear entirely, and wishes him the best in that placating tone of his. They talk about the layout for the website, and which angles Frederick thinks will be best to use for the publication, and a dozen other related subjects that Will turns on the conversational autopilot for.

Blessedly, it's easy to excuse himself after that, telling Frederick that he needs to go sort through his shots. Frederick's used to being dismissed in favor of Will's art, so it's hardly a faux pas. Will leaves, and doesn't miss how Frederick floats over to a group of betas. His courtship will be public knowledge by tomorrow's papers.

And then Will gets in his car and drives to Hannibal. He mumbles his way through getting a room, and stumbles through putting his camera bags onto the bed, and then walks as casually as possible to the nearest elevator. Will knocks, the door opens, and Hannibal pulls him into his room, slamming the door behind him.

His arms are suddenly full of naked omega.

"Oh my God." Will doesn't know where to touch first, so he just lets his hands figure it out. He runs his palms from Hannibal's waist and up his back, across his chest, caressing, exploring. "You're strong and muscular, and soft in all the best places, and I have no idea what to say to you or what I'm doing and *Jesus,* Hannibal, you smell *amazing."*

"I need you," Hannibal pants into the side of Will's neck. He keeps doing that, like he already knows how sensitive the skin is there. Will knows Hannibal will find his collarbones soon enough, and then his shoulders, and--

“Are you in heat?” He takes a deep, shuddering breath as Hannibal mouths along his neck. “Your skin is so hot--is that normal?”

“I'm not, but I do run hot,” says Hannibal, and then licks and nibbles his way up Will’s neck. “Not like this, though. Never like this.”

Will drags his nails up the back of Hannibal’s neck and into his hair, bucks his hips helplessly when Hannibal groans. “I feel out of control, but not like--oh *fuck*-- not like my yearly scheduled rut.” He keeps one hand in Hannibal’s hair, grips it in his fingers, pulls Hannibal’s mouth away from his skin, snarls.

“Alpha,” Hannibal whispers, baring his neck reflexively.

“We can’t--” Will closes his eyes, but doesn’t release Hannibal. “Tell me you have a neck guard in case I lose control.”

Hannibal hums, rubbing himself shamelessly against Will. “Over next to the bed. I wasn’t sure if--”

Will pulls back on Hannibal’s head harder, snaps his eyes back open when Hannibal sighs shakily. “I said I would court you, did I not?”

“Yes, alpha.”

“Do you really think I would take you dishonorably?”

Hannibal’s eyes are dilated; Will smells the unmistakable honey-sweetness of slick. “No,” he says reverently. “No, my virtuous alpha.”

Will relaxes and begins petting Hannibal’s cheek with his thumb, holding his face gently in his hand, a counterpoint from the rough grasp he maintains on Hannibal’s hair. “You are my first,” Will tells him. “You are my first, and you will be my last, and I will treat you as you deserve. I would not see you shamed.”

“See?” and Hannibal smiles, the first real smile Will’s seen from him. His own hand raises and strokes along the beard Will grew during their separation. “You’re doing so well already.”

“It’s easy, being with you.” More quietly, Will adds, “I seem to know myself when you are with me.”

“And what does your instinct tell you now?” Hannibal pulls against Will’s hand--he doesn’t press their lips together, just hovers there, nearly touching. “What would you do with me, alpha?”

Will tilts his head, and tilts Hannibal’s, too, pulls him where he wants him, and then kisses him for the first time. It’s tender, surprisingly chaste considering one of them is nude and the air already smells like sex between their mingling pheromones. Hannibal’s mouth is soft, like his stomach and chest are, like Will had imagined it would be. He hesitates, then runs the tip of his tongue along the seam of Hannibal’s lips.

“Open for me,” says Will, and then Hannibal does. Their tongues stroke along each other, the mimic of a lover’s embrace. Hannibal tastes like mint, but also the champagne from the after party, and Will feels drunk already. “I want you on the bed,” Will says after finally breaking the kiss. “Will you present for me?”

“Gladly.” Will watches him as he walks into the room--his thighs gleam with slick, and his stride is almost predatory. The idea that someone so physically powerful, so commanding, wants to submit for *him* makes Will giddy. But he pushes it down, and replaces it with arousal, and strips off his jacket as he crosses the room.

“Do you remember what else I said when we met?”

Hannibal settles the side of his face further into his own arms, arches his back more deeply. “I remember everything, Will. You are extremely memorable,” and it makes Will chuckle.

“Good,” Will says as he gets on the bed behind him. He rolls up his shirt sleeves while Hannibal watches him, face turned, his eyes still dark. “God, look at you, Hannibal.” Will traces up the side of a thigh with one finger, relishes how it makes Hannibal shiver. “You’re so beautiful.” His hand reaches Hannibal’s ass, and then the other joins; Will spreads Hannibal’s cheeks, and bends to take a first tentative lick at his hole.

Hannibal melts into the bed.

Will licks again, a broader stripe, and slick flows, thick and as honey-sweet as it smelled. He points his tongue and coaxes the muscle open, laps up slick like syrup, sips it like nectar. Hannibal’s thighs begin to shake, so Will sits back up, as difficult as it is to do. He’d rather keep his face buried in Hannibal’s ass.

“Spread for me,” Will tells him, pressing Hannibal’s legs farther apart with his hands. Hannibal does, and Will praises him for it, then dives right back in.

There’s no timidness now. Will sucks at the rim, and lets go of one cheek so he can pet Hannibal’s thigh. He thrusts in his tongue, rubs his bearded face against Hannibal’s ass, meets Hannibal groan for groan. It’s impossible not to feel as hopelessly aroused as Hannibal does; Will knows innately where and when and how to touch him, depending more on his empathy than on his newly-developing instinct.

Regretfully, Will pulls away to breathe, though it’s difficult to stop. “I bet you could come like this, couldn’t you?”

“Yes, alpha.” Hannibal sounds drugged. Will immediately loves it. He can’t help but think of coming home to this, to his mate, ready and waiting for Will to lick him open and feast on him for hours.

His cock jerks in his pants. “I want to suck you,” says Will in a rush. If he stays focused on Hannibal, then maybe he won’t snap like a rubber band and knot him here and now,. “Your cock, Hannibal, I need to get my mouth around you before I fuck up and fuck into you and wind up biting you.”

"Please, Will." Hannibal sounds lost already, so Will takes it upon himself to get up and get the neck shield. Instead of the typical hard plastic, this is made of leather--plain, but certainly not common. Will would expect no less from his omega.

His.

Will's hands tremble, and Hannibal whines his displeasure, but Will snaps it around Hannibal's neck, at last. He rolls Hannibal from all fours to his side, then lies down next to him.

Slick drips down Hannibal's cock, gathers on the tip like dew, and Will's mouth is watering. "I just...I can feel your arousal and it's...it's cyclical and I want to make you feel *so* good, as good as I do." He pauses long enough to suck once at the head, tasting slick and precome, and Hannibal's hand finds its way to Will's hair.

"I need to please you," Will continues as Hannibal combs through Will's hair with his fingers. "I need to take care of you, to cherish you." His mouth is drawn back to the shaft, licking and kissing along it. With his free hand, he reaches around and slides two fingers into Hannibal's ass. They move easily, pumping in and out, slick flowing heavy over his hand; he can't even imagine how wet Hannibal will be during his heat.

"Knot me." Hannibal's voice is strained; he sounds hoarse, and Will wonders just how loudly Hannibal's been moaning. Will's been absolutely engrossed in his work. "Alpha, knot me, *please,"* and Will wishes he wasn't so set on courting him and making him an honest omega.

Will searches with his fingers--he's never found a prostate on anyone but himself, and now he wonders how amenable Hannibal would be to playing with Will's ass. The thought is there and gone once Will finds the little nub of nerves he's feeling for. He chases Hannibal's cock with his mouth, then sucks hard on the head once just as he rubs Hannibal's prostate.

His mouth is flooded with Hannibal's release, and Will's surprised not only by the immediacy of it, but by the lack of bitterness or salt that he expected. Hannibal only tastes clean, and then there's the underlying flavor of his slick.

Will swallows, then sinks his mouth further down Hannibal's cock, continuing to rub Hannibal's prostate. He's shaking apart beside Will, and he swings a leg over Hannibal's shoulders to pull him closer, to keep him still. His pleasured sobbing sounds as lovely as his harpsichord, so Will keeps going. He pulls a second, and then a third orgasm from Hannibal's body, wrings him dry until he lies limp. Only then does Will finally move away.

He's never seen anyone look so blissful, not even in the heat sex shoots he's been on.

"Are you okay?"

Hannibal nods very, very slowly.

Will grins as he sits up completely, running a hand down Hannibal's flank. "Can I get you anything?"

“In…” Hannibal searches for Will’s hand and tugs him up the bed. “In a minute.”

“Would you like me to hold you?”

Hannibal opens his eyes; they’re glazed over, and it makes Will laugh. “Only if you undress first,” says Hannibal. “My perfect alpha.”

“More like imperfect,” Will says, fumbling with the buttons on his shirt. "Attempting, but imperfect."

“If you cannot trust yourself, Will, then you can trust me.” Hannibal reaches out and stills Will’s hands. “You are perfect.”

Will feels his neck warm, and Hannibal beckons him back. They kiss, smile pressed to smile, and work on removing Will’s clothes together.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

And now, feelings...

AND MORE FILTH.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

During their three months of forced separation, Will spent his time learning how to be a "good alpha". He'd never been the most secure person, especially regarding his sexuality. It wasn't that he was confused as to where his attractions lay; Will has never liked betas, and he liked other alphas even less. Celibacy was the easiest option, because he never thought he could live up to a modern omega's standards.

He convinced his father to write a letter exempting him from dynamics class in high school, took an art elective, and went on his somewhat merry way. As far as Will had been concerned, that was that.

Hannibal had been greatly affected by Will's instinctual slips, but Will knew acting on instinct alone would ultimately prove to be unsatisfactory--if not to Hannibal, then to himself. So, after the quickest bathroom jerk-off of his life, Will drove back home from the Baltimore shoot, called his best friend while he was letting out his dogs, and asked for advice. Beverly brought over a number of terrifying magazines the next day, publications with covers that screamed sex appeal and questionable fashion and unhealthy attitudes.

"Do you actually read these?" he asked her, pen in hand, mid-quiz. Beverly shrugged. "They seem sort of...I don't know, outdated? Sneakily catering to traditional views?"

"It's not all what-not-to-wear bullshit and sex tips, Will," she said, appraising her polish job on Will's toenails. "There's really good interviews and political discourse in omega mags, you know? It just gets overlooked because--" Beverly sighed. "It's a scale, trying to find a happy medium between advancement and enjoyment. Easier to dismiss what might be seen as belittling."

"No offense intended," Will began, "but I keep up with intersectional omegism as part of my *job.* I value an omega's choice, which is why I need help with learning traditional values, because I don't entirely understand them."

"Look, you wanted advice, and this is the best I've got." She started applying a top coat. "Short of sending you back to dyn ed, I have no idea what to do."

Alana hadn't been much help, either. At least Beverly had been an omega; as a beta, Alana was almost as lost as Will.

"Couldn't you just ask him out like the rest of the world does?" And he had to admit that she had a point. The majority of alphas and omegas had done away with courtship entirely and simply adopted the betan model of dating. Courting was relegated to the world of romance novels, to Hollywood and the high class.

Secretly, the idea had always appealed to Will, of demonstrating that he could be an ideal mate, that he could provide and please. But that felt like perpetuating a problem, so, when he chose to go through life unmated, he didn't bother to learn about dating, either.

Alana's alpha niece would be a better partner than Will. At least Abigail had a textbook and a clue.

"This Hannibal guy wants you to court him, right?" Will nodded at her grudgingly. "And he knows all about you?"

"I suppose."

Abigail rolled her eyes and bonked his glasses with her pencil. "Then why are you so worried?"

Because I don't want to fuck this up, so Will used every available moment to download and read any decent material he could find. When he ran out of that, Will moved on to suspect material, if for no other reason than to learn what *not* to do.

In the end, Will had thrown his hands in the air and secluded himself with Netflix and every black-and-white film he could find. The omegas on screen are dainty and fussy, classy dames with no will of their own, a perfect model for a 1930s omega. Submissive, genteel, attention-grabbing.

All adjectives led straight to Hannibal Lecter.

Will may or may not have grabbed a handful of old envelopes and started taking notes.

The plot of any of the films is easy to follow: a liberated omega from the beginning of the movie ultimately finds happiness in the arms of a strong alpha suitor. They give up their names and give in to pampering. Will's absolutely certain that Hannibal could break him in half over his knee, but spoiling seems achievable, at least.

Hannibal seemed genuinely grateful when Will offered to draw him a bath after recovering from Will's insistent rimming, for instance, which Will had decided was on his personal "must do for my omega" list. Still, Hannibal turned it down.

"Though I am typically very fastidious in my appearance and grooming," he said, both of them still wrapped up in each other's arms, "I find our combined scents satisfying."

"So do I, but I thought maybe you were sticky or sore or uncomfortab--" Hannibal shut him up with another kiss.

“Your beard is something of a mess,” he said when they broke apart again.

Will hadn’t even noticed. “I’d hate to see your thighs.”

“I was under quite the opposite impression,” said Hannibal, propping his head up with his hand.

“You know what I meant.”

“Perhaps I need a reminder,” which led to Will cleaning Hannibal’s thighs with his tongue, and then--since he was already there--he rimmed him again, making an even bigger mess of his facial hair. It was more than worth it, though, to feel Hannibal squirm beneath his mouth and cant his hips and push back for more.

“I think I could do this forever,” admitted Will as he kissed the scratches left behind by his beard.

“I’m half-tempted to let you try, but that bath you suggested earlier sounds lovely now.” Hannibal paused. “You may have been correct in your earlier assessment. I do feel rather sore.”

Will is still smiling now as he washes his face at the sink, watching Hannibal in the mirror. “I think I could do this forever, too,” he says, turning around as he pats his face dry. “Take care of you, I mean.”

Hannibal looks at him curiously. “That reminds me.”

“Of the babe?”

“I don’t follow,” Hannibal says, and Will chuckles.

“Never mind. We’ll have a movie night sometime.” He sits down on the side of the tub. “What does that remind you of?”

“I have yet to take care of you.” Hannibal glances down at Will’s cock. “You’ve let me be greedy, alpha.”

Will licks his lips; his dick twitches as he follows Hannibal’s heated gaze. “I like focusing on you.”

“You are accustomed to focusing.” Hannibal looks back up at Will; he seems pleased with himself, and it takes Will a moment to figure out why.

“That was terrible.”

“Most puns are.”

“I thought you were trying to seduce me.” Will gasps as Hannibal’s arm suddenly emerges from the water, hand gripping his deflated knot almost painfully. His cock begins to fill, and Will wonders how Hannibal learned he liked rough treatment before Will, himself.

Hannibal loosens his fist and strokes up, thumbing over the head. “Would my alpha like to be seduced?”

“Fuck, Hannibal. You’re gonna kill me.”

“After your earlier demonstration?” The points of Hannibal’s teeth peek out from under his lips. “Dear Will, you may kill me first.”

Will takes a deep breath, then moves Hannibal’s hand away from his cock. “This isn’t...this isn’t what I’d intended to happen.”

Hannibal tilts his head, appraising him. It’s amusing, watching someone be concerned in a bubble bath. “What did you intend?”

“To court you,” Will says, “like I said. And then we wound up here. Not that I mind,” he explains before Hannibal can reply. “I enjoyed it, enjoyed *you.* But I…” Will sighs and pets down the back of Hannibal’s neck, enjoys the way his eyes flutter closed, how it makes him smile unguarded. “I should’ve brought flowers or something.”

“You brought yourself,” murmurs Hannibal. “You are enough.”

“I get the feeling you’re more of an arrange-the-flowers-myself type, anyway.” He stops stroking Hannibal in favor of putting a finger beneath his chin. Will doesn’t especially like eye contact--it’s easier to look through a camera lens--but he wants to look at him now. “Yeah, a centerpiece-at-dinner type. No meal on the table, but plating in the kitchen. You really are old school.”

“What else am I?”

Will leans down and kisses his forehead. “You like to hide in plain sight,” he continues. “You’re very good at playing proper, finding ways to explain away primal urges, biological instinct. There’s an etiquette to--I bet you throw dinner parties, don’t you?”

Hannibal reaches for him with undeserved awe--at least, as far as Will’s concerned. It tugs in his ribs, makes it hard to breathe. Not once had he ever considered that someone might look at him like this.

“You’re polite, but bossy,” says Will, leaning into Hannibal’s touch. “It’s why we work, because I’m hardly polite and never order anyone around outside of a photo shoot. A passive dominant and an assertive submissive. True mates, identically different. Traditional and modern all at once, public and private, a peculiar balance.”

It’s impossible for Will to not return to petting his omega; Hannibal softens under his touch. Will keeps going. “You’re spirited and independent. An alpha with traditional inclinations like yours? They would want to break you. But you can’t be broken. They, on the other hand…” He narrows his eyes, looks harder, sees further. “I think you might actually kill someone, were you so inclined. If they insulted you.”

“Alpha.”

Will smiles and wipes a tear off of Hannibal's cheek with his thumb. "You don't scare me, Hannibal. I'm impressed, like everyone else is, only for different reasons. You've been so lonely, haven't you? I know I have. Both of us afraid of what we might become otherwise."

"Will." Hannibal's other hand comes out of the bath; it's warm and soapy on Will's face. He's surrounded by the smell of lavender soap and Hannibal's own scent. "Let me kneel for you."

All he can do is nod. Will certainly can't breathe properly. He may never do so again.

Getting Hannibal from the bath to the bedroom is a blur of time and movement. Will tries to wrap Hannibal in a towel, but is more or less pushed out the bathroom door, then pushed onto the bed. He lands with a bounce, laughing. Hannibal has a wild, mischievous glint to his eyes as he tosses a pillow into the floor.

And there is Hannibal, kneeling between Will's legs like he belongs there, as though it's the only place he wants to be. Will reaches for the neck shield on the bedside table; Hannibal lifts his head and extends his neck so Will can put it on him.

"What do you wish of me?" he asks afterward, hands on Will's thighs.

"I feel like you already have a plan here." Will imagines Hannibal has a plan for everything, plays the board seven steps ahead of everyone else. Until Will, anyway. That's *real* power, Will thinks, to hold the theoretical leash of a strong-willed individual. The intersection of world and dynamics history seems even more unfair when put in such perspective.

When Hannibal makes no move, Will tells him, "I'm not going to hold you back. Not ever." He grins cheekily. "I do want to have conversations beyond pheromones sometime, though."

"How could you ever think you were a bad alpha?" Hannibal's cheek is wonderfully rough along the inside of Will's thigh. "The scent is strongest here, you know, at the femoral vein."

Will puts a hand in Hannibal's hair, strokes back from his forehead and down to the base of his neck. Hannibal sighs again, a warm puff of air against Will's skin. "You sound like you've read up on it."

"One of the greatest mysteries left to us is that of our own sexuality. I find the study stimulating." Hannibal places a kiss at the base of Will's deflated knot, then inhales deeply. "Your scent is--" He nuzzles into Will's groin, and Will impulsively grips Hannibal's hair as he had earlier, then pushes Hannibal's face into the join of his leg.

"You like that?" Will asks, though he doesn't need to; Hannibal's weak little groan is answer enough. "You like me making you?"

"You're my intellectual equal."

Will hums. "I see." It's simpler than Will thought it would be, tapping into the alphan nature he's repressed for so long. Perhaps because he's safe here, with Hannibal. True mates, indeed.

"Tell me, alpha: what do you see?"

“You want me to predict you, to decipher you, to unravel you.” Will traces Hannibal’s cheek bone. “I can do that.”

“Leather and pine,” says Hannibal, voice quiet but oddly frantic. “Leather, pine, charcoal and parchment and sweat.”

Will closes his eyes and tries to put all the pieces together. It doesn’t take long. “You want my knot.”

“Oh, yes.”

“You want me to knot your mouth,” and Hannibal noses in farther, sucks part of Will’s knot into his mouth, tugs on the most sensitive skin with the tips of his teeth. Will grits his own teeth against the pinpricks of pain as they shoot up his spine and pool hot in his gut. Hannibal’s making noise akin to a purring cat--it’s adorable, so Will keeps petting him, down his shoulders fingertips reaching the fur on his chest. “You want me to make my scent the only thing you can breathe, don’t you?”

“Alpha, *please.”* Hannibal reaches between his own legs to where his cock stands hard, but Will nudges Hannibal’s hand away with his foot.

“No,” he says softly, “that’s mine.” The smell of slick grows stronger. Combined with Hannibal’s attention to his cock and his frankly beautiful submission, Will is almost entirely erect. “You can start, if you’d like.”

Hannibal swallows him down into wet, eager heat, and Will almost comes and ruins the moment, the experience. His first instinct is to grab Hannibal’s face between both of his hands and thrust, so he does. Between his palms, Hannibal goes limp. Compliant.

It just makes Will fuck into him harder.

Around his cock, Hannibal moans. Will looks down and past Hannibal’s face--he knows Hannibal’s eyes are trained on him, there’s no need to confirm. His hands lie palm-up on his thighs, fingers twitching. It’s mesmerizing, watching Hannibal control himself because Will wants him to.

Hannibal’s tongue drags against his cock; his mouth is loose and sloppy, his chin spit-soaked. Will feels like he’s drowning, but Hannibal’s the one who’s about to have difficulty breathing.

When Will begins to feel his knot swell, he slows his movement. “I’m going to push down into your throat, Hannibal. Are you ready?” Hannibal nods immediately, so Will pulls his face toward him. He squeezes Hannibal’s head between his hands like a vice; instead of thrusting, Will just moves his head up and down his cock.

“Open up for me,” says Will, his tone demanding. It’s too hard to hold back any longer, feels too good, so as soon as Hannibal emerges long enough from his daze to do as Will told him, he pushes in and spills down Hannibal’s throat, letting his knot pop open in another body for the first time, directly behind Hannibal’s teeth.

Orgasm has never been an ecstatic religious experience, but listening to Hannibal choke and sob around him and coming a second time is the closest to God he's ever felt.

"Give--give me your hands, Hannibal," and he does. Will holds and rubs them--this is more important than enjoying his release. This is what Hannibal wanted, and Will's going to take care of him. "There you go, honey. Relax; breathe through your nose. I've got you. I've got you."

Hannibal swallows reflexively around him again, and Will whisper-moans at the way Hannibal's throat milks him. Will's chest is heaving as he brings Hannibal's hands to his mouth and kisses his fingertips just as he had at the after-party.

They sit like that, Hannibal scenting him, claiming him as Will has claimed him, until Will's knot goes down and he can pull out. Will doesn't try to get Hannibal up to the bed, only encourages him to scoot back so Will can join him on the floor and hold him in his lap. Hannibal curls up in Will's arms, and Will is once again dumbfounded that this is his, that Hannibal is his. Will explores Hannibal's body as his breathing regulates--Hannibal has taken it upon himself to scent Will's neck now. Beneath the silver hair on Hannibal's chest are his small breasts, common for omegan men but still a marvel to Will. He cups them one at a time, lets a nipple stiffen beneath his thumb, then drags his hand down to his cock.

It's soft and wet with Hannibal's come.

"You came." Will blinks, and Hannibal smiles tiredly. "Just from--" He bites his lip against the words.

"Serving you." He licks along Will's jugular. "You can say it, Will."

His fingers find their way to the side of Hannibal's neck, and then up through his hair, sweeping back the sweaty strands so Will can kiss his forehead. "It's still very new to me, indulging these impulses."

"And yet, even so, you were glorious."

"Yeah?"

Hannibal smiles against his neck. "Yes."

Will grabs blindly for Hannibal's bag; for as prepared as Hannibal was for their encounter, he's sure he'll find a water bottle inside, maybe a snack. As expected, there's both. He refuses Hannibal's request to feed himself, and also to drink by himself; Hannibal tries to glare at him, but he's too exhausted to work up anything believable.

Satisfied that he's done a passable job at taking care of his omega, Will reaches behind him and tugs the comforter off of the bed, then wraps it around them both. They sit there, talking quietly, surrounded by their mingled scents, well into the morning.

Chapter End Notes

I might need Jesus.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

This is nothing but fluff. Fluffity fluff fluff. Next chapter will post on Sunday!

Will spent almost the entirety of the next year courting Hannibal.

At first, Will overthought it and psyched himself out. He knew he'd done so because Hannibal sent him a handwritten letter with the actual words, "You are thinking too hard," but also, "You already have my affections, alpha." It was signed, and smelled entirely of Hannibal. His omega was nothing if not manipulative. Yet another trait Will adored in his future mate, though some might question his radical acceptance of all things Hannibal.

A handkerchief caught his eye on a shoot for *Vakker,* and he asked the stylist where he purchased it. When the flimsy square of cloth wound up costing more than his first car, Will texted a picture of it to Beverly, who promptly found a lookalike on Etsy--

"Hand-dyed, Will," she told him. "One-of-a-kind."

"Still paisley?"

"Still disgustingly paisley."

--which Will had to download an app for, and then wait *eight goddamn weeks* for, which meant he had to get creative and figure out what to send in the meantime. As much as he loved Hannibal's handwriting, and although he wanted more anything that smelled like Hannibal (even if it was just one of his stupid socks that required suspenders, and who even did that anymore, anyway?) Will didn't like feeling more incapable of the relationship than he already did.

The copy of Dante's *Paradiso* was procured entirely on a whim. Will had been a frequent patron of the Patrick Henry Library for as long as he could remember, but he'd never managed to be there during one of the Friends of the Library used book sales. He walked by on his way in, the book caught his eye, and he came home with it.

"Instinct," he wrote on the title page. With Sharpie, of course, which meant it bled through the next five pages. The cover was a little torn, and there was more than a little highlighter on significantly yellowed and dog-eared pages. Will tossed it in a bubble mailer and into the mailbox before he could think better of it.

Hannibal called him after he received it. Turned out he loved Dante. Maybe instinct was good for more than just mind-blowingly awesome sex. Will wondered exactly what all he had missed in dynamics class.

For the next seven weeks, while waiting for the handkerchief to arrive, Will practiced listening to himself. Hannibal wound up with a strange conglomerate of items from Will's experiment with self-acceptance. A broken piece of antler from a stag ("The dogs probably chased him into a tree. Did I tell you about the dogs?"); a Ziploc baggie filled with collected seeds from the heirloom tomatoes his neighbor sent over ("These were good. Not pretty, but good."); a plaid fabric bookmark Abigail gave him with a conspiratorial wink ("You'd like her. She actually knows what she's doing.") Every random gift received a beautiful thank-you note, and another whiff of cedarwood and orange, vetiver and verbena.

Will tried desperately not to be creepy and keep them all in a shoebox so he could scent them again at his leisure. He failed.

Finally, the handkerchief came. Beverly had done a fantastic job. It was, undoubtedly, disgustingly paisley.

Will tried to talk himself out of wearing it next to his femoral artery so Hannibal could scent it at *his* leisure. In this, too, he failed.

Hannibal didn't send him a thank-you note. Instead, he showed up on his porch.

The remainder of the year went in much the same way. Will would order a weird handkerchief that only Hannibal could wear without looking like a psychopath. In the time it took for the handkerchief to arrive, Hannibal received a number of esoteric presents, and Will purchased a photo file box for his thank-you note collection. Will received the handkerchief, wore the handkerchief, mailed the handkerchief, and then inevitably wound up with a Hannibal on his doorstep.

Not once did they have sex--

"It isn't proper during a formal courtship," Hannibal had informed him.

"And the hotel?"

"Our courtship was unestablished."

"Could we unestablish it and then reestablish it with less formality?"

--but they did watch *Labyrinth* seventeen times, and scented each other at least three times more than that. Will felt like they were stuck in Regency romance hell, but at least they were stuck there together.

The week of Hannibal's heat was especially intolerable. Hannibal would call him to hold conversations with monosyllabic words, needing to hear the voice of his alpha. He would eventually be reduced from single syllables to grunts, and Will would talk to Hannibal as he used his knotting toy. It was no surprise when Hannibal's over-the-phone heat sent Will into an early rut, and then Hannibal had to return the favor.

Finally--finally, God, *finally*-- Hannibal decided that Will had courted him long enough for them to announce a mating day. Will tried to understand why Hannibal felt the need to

announce to anyone who read the *Baltimore Sun* on what date they would be having sex. In the end, he simply shrugged and went along with it.

Alana hadn't been able to wrap her head around the concept any more than Will had. "It's not like a wedding," she'd said. "Weddings celebrate a coupling."

"So do matings."

"Yeah, but it's different. Wedding is about the union; mating is about the sex."

That was the first time Will was defensive about his and Hannibal's upcoming mating day. "Weddings are about sex, too. Honeymoons."

She'd gave him a pointed look. "Okay, but weddings are celebrated *first,* Will. Not after."

Will gave up trying to explain. Hannibal had wanted a mating all his life, had been lonely and longing for a day of his own. He was loathe to deny Hannibal anything that made him happy.

To that end, Will had been prepared to have to sell his own home and part with his beloved canine family. Much to Will's shock, however, there had been no coaxing needed to get Hannibal to instead sell his home in Baltimore in lieu of moving out to Wolf Trap. All Will had to do was move the bed out of the living room and make way for three harpsichords and a grumpy theremin.

The rest of the planning had its bumps--

"Do you have an opinion on a photographer?" Hannibal had asked.

"I'm a photographer."

"You can hardly photograph your own mating day."

Will had sighed. "And you can hardly provide the music for it. Or the catering, for that matter. Or the arrangements *and* the invitations *and--"*

"I see your point."

--but, in the end, Will thought they made good compromises. A videographer and a chance for Abigail to build her art portfolio for college; Hannibal's harpist friend, Bedelia; some florist Beverly knew named Jimmy. That left Hannibal doing the inviting and the feeding, which was, "enough, I suppose," and Will had patted himself on the back for a bomb well-defused.

He even stood still for a tailor, and then put up with Hannibal's complete inability to decide on fabrics. At least the color had been decided by default, though Will wouldn't be allowed to see the generations' old Lecter family mating shield until the actual day itself.

"What looks best with lace, Will?" Hannibal had asked, holding up swatches of fabric that were practically indistinguishable.

“More lace?” Hannibal turned to look at him. “Less lace?”

“We can’t very well both wear lace.”

“Why not? You wear four plaids at a time and look wonderful.”

Hannibal had cleared his throat and kept going. “Which fabric do you prefer? I was considering the--” He paused, then simply handed the piece of fabric over to Will. “This one is called ‘choice one.’”

“You really do know me.”

“I know your abysmal sense of style.”

Will grinned. “Says the man who wears four plaids at a time.”

“So you mentioned,” said Hannibal, voice flat but eyes alight.

The fabric between Will’s fingers was stiff. “Wouldn’t you prefer something softer?” But Hannibal didn’t answer. “Did I say something wrong?”

“I think you assume too much,” and Will understood.

“This has nothing to do with stereotypes about omegas,” he explained, “and everything to do with my nipples. Feels chafe-y.”

The corners of Hannibal’s mouth perked up. “An excellent assessment.”

Will still had to return to the tailor a second, third, fourth, and fifth time.

“You really must love him,” Beverly’d said, “putting up with all that fuss.” Will had smiled at her.

Neither he nor Hannibal said a word about them being true mates. Some secrets were best kept; some bonds were stronger than love.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Ta-da! It's even more porn! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mating day eve, and Will is ready for the whole thing to be over with, mainly because there have been revelers banging pots outside Will's house for three hours now. "I think we're going to have to tunnel our way out."

"Whatever for?"

"Or set the dogs loose." Will peeps through his fingers, hands still covering his face, elbows still balanced on his knees. "Can I set the dogs loose?"

"No, you may not. Mrs. Komeda is allergic."

"Hannibal, why didn't you *say* anything about this?"

"It's traditional," says Hannibal, looking at Will as though he should know. "Charivari used to be performed to censure a mating; now, it celebrates it."

Will groans and rubs his temples. "I don't feel celebrated. I do, however, feel a migraine coming on."

Hannibal gives his odd little quarter-grin. "They'll leave as soon as you provide proof of the mating."

"What does that mean?"

"You wipe the blood from my neck and your mouth with a white cloth and then wave it out the window."

Will stares at him incredulously. "You have got to be fucking kidding me." Hannibal shakes his head, and Will sighs. "This isn't precisely the way I thought our first time would go." Before Hannibal can reply, Will says, "Yeah, I know. Tradition."

In Hannibal's defense, Will would bed him in the middle of a hurricane. It's been eighteen months since they first met; fifteen since their night at the hotel, since Will began courting him; they stopped courting four months ago, and have been planning ever since, and Will is beyond ready to knot and bite and claim. He expected it to be a little quieter, is all.

"This is weird," he tells Hannibal.

“How so?” Hannibal scoots over closer to him on the bed.

“You had all of these plans and dreams for the celebration,” says Will, staring quietly down at his hands. “This is...this right here, right now, it’s…”

Hannibal reaches out and takes his hand. “Your first time.”

“Second, technically, if you count the hotel.”

“You aren’t counting technicalities.”

“No.” The din continues outside, though it seems faded and fuzzy, muted. Will knows it isn’t, that he has simply grown used to it. Nevertheless, the room is mostly quiet, but he no longer welcomes the silence. The same worries about his proficiency at being an alpha, his hesitancy to follow along behind his nature, resurface and echo dumbly in his skull. He’s so wrapped up in his own inadequacy that Will nearly fails to notice that Hannibal’s pulling his t-shirt over his head. “What are you doing?”

“You only managed to make it halfway out of your clothes,” Hannibal explains. He folds the shirt in quarters and tosses it onto the bedside table. As he presses Will to lie back on the bed, Hannibal adds, “I thought I should help.”

Will laughs; after a few grueling days of welcoming guests to town and acting sociable, being taken care of is refreshing. No wonder it appeals to omegas so much. Hannibal’s hands are soft, and it’s easy to close his eyes and let Hannibal undress him and pet his hair and lie over him like a blanket. He tilts his head to the side to give Hannibal more room to tuck his face into Will’s neck and scent him.

“You’re such a sniffer,” he says, still laughing lightly.

“I cannot deny it.” Hannibal’s lips and teeth suck at Will’s pulse; he wonders if Hannibal intends to bite him in return.

Will closes his eyes and wraps his arms and legs around Hannibal. “I’m afraid,” he admits.

“What of?”

“I’m not your first. What if I--Jesus, it sounds ridiculous saying it out loud.”

Hannibal pushes up to look at him. “Are you having performance anxiety?” Will wishes he didn’t look so damn amused.

“Yeah. The percussion section really isn’t helping, either.”

“Do you have earplugs?”

Will rolls his eyes. “Thanks. That really helps.”

“I am being quite serious.” Hannibal pulls at Will’s chin, forcing Will to look him in the eye. He assesses Will, searches him, and the amusement melts into concern. “Let me take care of

you."

"I want to be a good alpha."

Hannibal smiles at him, almost sad. "And you are. Caretaking goes both ways, Will. That has yet to change, the give and take between mates. Tradition dictated otherwise for centuries, subjugated all to alphan imposition, separated the sexes into their spheres, chained all of us to stereotypes. But there are truths that cannot be explained away, no matter how firmly it is pigeonholed. I told you I preferred traditional practices with regards to private dynamics; omegism frees us to make these choices for ourselves." Hannibal sighs heavily, pushing Will's hair behind his ear, toying with an errant curl. "I have failed to explain myself entirely. I allowed myself to be caught up in courtship."

Will raises his hand to pet Hannibal's neck, starting under his chin and trailing down. Anything to calm the bitter scent of self-reproach; he's never smelled it on Hannibal. It's unnatural. Will strokes him, soothes Hannibal into relaxing. "I enjoyed it, too," he says, "once I figured out how to court you."

"I regret that you felt inadequate. You must forgive me, alpha. I can be rather selfish."

"We're long past accepting each other." Will lets himself soak in the satisfaction of comforting Hannibal. The ruckus outside matters less and less; he has a purpose here inside. "Would you come down here, honey? Let me gentle you?"

Hannibal looks grateful, and now Will understands. For all the talk Hannibal makes of his acceptance of himself, he still can't ask for what he wants. It isn't that Will has anyone to measure up to from Hannibal's past; it's that there's no one from Hannibal's past that matters.

There's a strange freedom to be found in setting down his own expectations and demands of himself in favor of picking up Hannibal's.

Dynamics.

"There you are," says Will, letting Hannibal settle back over him, caging him in with his body the way Will cages Hannibal with his words. He rubs light little circles over the back of Hannibal's neck, relishes the way Hannibal sighs and settles. "There you go, honey."

"Why did you choose that epithet?" His breath puffs against Will's neck, damp and warm.

Will smooths his free palm all the way down Hannibal's spine, down one ass cheek, stopping to hold it. He makes an appreciative hum as he kneads it, grips to enjoy how supple Hannibal is here, like his chest and his stomach and, "Do you have any idea how gorgeous you are?"

"I thought my vanity was apparent by now," Hannibal replies, and he moves his ass beneath Will's hand. The motion rubs their cocks together, and they both groan at the contact. Their groins had been aligned before, but now they both rut against each other slowly, stoking the fire. "You haven't answered me, alpha."

Still pressing up into the roll of Hannibal's hips, Will teasingly slides a finger down the crack of Hannibal's ass before sliding it barely inside his entrance. He circles the tip of his finger, not stretching but taunting. Hannibal's hips stutter as he begins to lose himself to his own hormones, struggling between pushing against Will's cock and sinking back onto his finger.

"The first time I called you 'honey' was honestly a slip of the tongue," explains Will. "You were forgetting to breathe, caught there on your knees, mouth around my knot--it felt so, so good. You seemed sort of...in shock, I guess. I just needed to comfort you."

"And now?" Hannibal mumbles.

Will grins and pulls his finger away from Hannibal's hole, dripping with slick. He brings it to Hannibal's mouth, rubbing slick over his lips. "You tell me."

Hannibal's tongue darts out to lick at the smear on his mouth. "I taste nothing like honey," he insists, yet wraps his lips around Will's finger, anyway.

"Whatever you taste like, I'm kind of addicted to it." He thinks--it doesn't take long, at all--and says, "Get up here, actually. Let me put my mouth on you."

"No, I--" Hannibal licks his lips, then moans in Will's skin. "It's not honey, but it is delicious."

Will chuckles. "Scoot up a little and get back up on your elbows," he says, and then returns to fingering Hannibal as soon as he complies. Hannibal's chest is in Will's face; when Will finds his prostate, he stretches his neck out and wraps his mouth around a nipple. It's hard not to laugh around his mouthful when Hannibal curses and lets his forehead hit the wall. Will licks around the bud, clamps down with his teeth when Hannibal begins fucking himself back onto Will's finger.

"Alpha," he whines, and Will stops.

"Want to feed you more of yourself," whispers Will. He expects Hannibal's move to grasp Will's wrist and pull him out. Will complies, even proffers it for Hannibal's mouth. Also as expected, Hannibal laves his own slick from Will's hand, and it might be the hottest thing Will has ever seen.

What Will never saw coming was Hannibal reaching back, grabbing Will's dick, lining himself up, and sliding down in one swift stroke.

Will's proud of himself for not immediately popping his knot.

For a few moments, they just lay there together, panting in each other's ears. Hannibal mouths awkwardly at Will's hand. Will touches Hannibal's rim to feel where they join, how stretched it is around his cock. He thinks he should say something, like they do in all the cheesy romances he's wound up reading over the long months, but Hannibal beats him to that, too.

“I have been waiting for this since the moment I saw you in a frumpy corduroy coat,” he says. Hannibal moves on to kissing Will’s jaw. It’s like walking into that hotel room all over again for Will, not knowing where to put his hands or how to respond. “It was the first time my nose ever lied to me,” continues Hannibal. “Your scent said you were inferior, and then I looked at you and wanted to crawl to you and beg forgiveness for ever thinking so.”

Will’s hands shake as he rests them on Hannibal’s hips. He’s overcome all over. Hannibal clenches around his cock, and Will cries out and jerks up. This isn’t how Will pictured his first time going, either; it’s *better*.

“I never thought I would find anyone who could accept me as I am, and then you found me.”

“Move, Hannibal,” and Will’s voice is already high-pitched, choked on both of their emotions. A hand cards through his hair, and Will turns his face to find it, to scent the pulse at Hannibal’s wrist. Will licks it with the very tip of his tongue, and then again; he swears he tastes the tang of the blood beneath the skin.

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “My sweet alpha,” he says. The praise makes Will feel giddy, and his smile must look slightly drunk, because when Hannibal leans up carefully and gazes down at him, he starts to laugh. “Do you still want me to move?” he asks, though he’s already planting his hands on Will’s shoulders for balance. “You seem content already.”

“Yeah,” says Will, hands finding their way back to Hannibal’s chest. He thumbs at both nipples, watches Hannibal bite his lip. “I’m content. What about you?” Hannibal finally squirms, chest pressing into Will’s hands. “Are *you* content? Or do you ache for my knot?”

With a surprisingly harsh growl, Hannibal lifts up on Will’s cock, and then slams himself back down.

“Oh *fuck--”*

Hannibal doesn’t let up, doesn’t rest, just keeps steadily fucking himself. Will hears himself sighing and wheezing as the air is continually pushed from his lungs; he can’t catch a full breath, but he doesn’t care. It’s impossible to think beyond the remarkable creature leaning over him, chasing their own pleasure, face contorted, wild, primal. Hannibal’s cock is purpling hard, foreskin drawn back, and to hell with expectations, Will wants that inside him at some point. His nails dig into Will’s shoulder as he rides, and Will can smell his own blood.

“Pin me down.” It comes out in a rush. Will almost doesn’t realize he said it out loud.

Above him, Hannibal blinks in shock, then stills. “What?”

“I want to watch you exhaust yourself on my cock, watch you come without my touch,” Will explains, and Hannibal closes his eyes and swears again. “If you don’t pin me down, I’ll wind up flipping us and--”

But Will doesn’t get a chance to continue. Hannibal pulls off of him, then drags Will down the bed. Just as quickly, he’s lined up and sunken down, a hand around each of Will’s wrists,

and Hannibal's riding him even more viciously than before.

"There you are," repeats Will, because this is Hannibal, too. "You don't know how to ask for someone to be sweet to you, but you know how to take."

"Alpha," he says through teeth clenched with effort.

"God, honey, you always walk scared, don't you?" Hannibal makes a broken sound, but keeps going; so does Will. "You don't want to be caught out as a stereotype, loving soft things and being comforted and--and *kept."* Will's cock hits Hannibal's prostate, and Hannibal throws back his head and snarls, showing off the unmarred and muscled expanse of his neck. "But there's this beautiful monster in you," Will continues, "and that can't be seen, either. Has there been anything in life that truly satisfied you, Hannibal?"

"You." It's so quiet, so overshadowed by Hannibal's orgasm that Will almost misses it. He's so tempted to look down at Hannibal's cock, but he keeps his eyes trained on Hannibal's own. They're blurry, and Will doesn't know which one of them is near tears.

"Keep going."

Hannibal does, and Will keeps up a litany of praise, a chorus of *divine* and *elegant* and *magnificent* . He lies still, doesn't let himself think of his own needs, of how much he needs to come and knot and bond. This is as much of a claim as the mating bite.

The second orgasm accompanies a sob, and Hannibal slows some, but doesn't stop. "So good," says Will. "My good omega."

He's panting with the strain on his muscles by the third, and Will doesn't feel much come hit his stomach. The fourth follows close behind, and there's no come, at all. Hannibal's head hangs down, chin hitting his chest, hair sticking sweaty to his face. He's obviously exhausted, but he tries to lift up again.

"No, no, it's okay." Will hushes him as best he can--Hannibal still has a death grip on his wrists. "You did so well. Just like I asked. Come down here, honey. Lay on me."

It takes a moment for Hannibal to finally let go and slowly collapse onto Will's chest. Will soothes him, petting his hair and Hannibal frantically scents him.

Finally--it feel like he's been waiting for hours--Will grips Hannibal's hips, plants his feet on the bed, and fucks up into Hannibal fast and rough.

Hannibal clings to him. "Alpha," he says, then repeats it, again and again, like Will might forget who he is if he doesn't.

Will's knot is swelling quickly, and he turns his head to the side, chasing Hannibal's mouth. He kisses him before rolling Hannibal onto his back. "I'm pushing in now," Will warns him, and Hannibal only nods. Maybe it's because Hannibal is expecting him to grunt and just go for it, but for whatever reason, when Will eases in and just holds there inside him, makes tiny pushes without pulling all the way out, simply rocking them together--

“I love you.”

--Will gasps and ties and comes.

“I adore you,” he says back to Hannibal, tired mouths resting together. “I love you, and you’re absolutely impossible, and I love you because you’re impossible.”

Hannibal only hums as he smiles, tilting his head to give Will more room to scent. “Bite me,” Hannibal tells him. “Claim me, Will. Own me.”

Will scents him a final time, then laps at the chosen spot, opens his mouth, and sinks in his teeth.

Chapter End Notes

See you on Tuesday for the grand finale!

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Happy Palentine's Day! [throws a pile of irredeemable fluff at you]

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will hates weddings. When he was a fledgling photographer, just starting out, he considered himself lucky to book one, but he despised them. It was impossible to suss out the feelings he needed from the ones that weren't necessary for the job. He was never satisfied with the results, but it was still better than working for the local paper.

This isn't a wedding, of course, just a mating celebration, a "congratulations on biting someone hard enough to scar" party. Still, Will had been worried that he would be a cold fish at his own...whatever-it-was.

Yet here he is, happy and warm and nothing like a fish, at all.

Not to say that it isn't horrifically weird to stand here, on the forget-me-not bedecked porch of his-- *their* house in Wolf Trap, in front of their good friends and the people Hannibal felt obligated to invite out of etiquette. There's no minister, thank God, though there is Mrs. Komeda crying in the front row, but she's hardly obtrusive. Freddie Lounds is off behind the garage trying to look inconspicuous with her telescoping lens, of course. That's no surprise whatsoever.

Beverly is at Will's back--

"I get that Mischa's holding onto their family mating heirloom," she'd said, "but why the hell do you need me up there?"

"Moral support and triage assistant," said Will. "Also backup, in case Hannibal decides to get sappy or recite 'Desiderata' or something else equally ridiculous."

Beverly shrugged. "You know I've got your six. Just let me know who to punch."

"Not Hannibal. Unless I ask you to, anyway."

--and Hannibal's sister is at his, holding a mysterious wooden box that holds the equally-mysterious mating shield. Will knows that it has lace, and that the colors are gold and light blue and dove gray, but that's all he's been able to discern. On this matter, Hannibal's mind is closed to him.

Regardless, Will actually feels comfortable, loose and easy. The gray suit isn't as stuffy as Will had feared; there isn't even a tie, the collars of both his and Hannibal's blue shirts

simply left open and unbuttoned. Will's not sure why--he guesses for treating Hannibal's mating mark, and maybe for the shield, though he's never seen one before. Whatever the reason, it means Will doesn't have to wear a tie, and that's fine by him.

Their lawyer is standing in the yard reading off the--and Will is never going to get used to the phrase--terms of conditional surrender, but Will isn't paying attention. His eyes keep flitting back and forth between Hannibal's face and the raw, still-oozing bite on his neck. Will needs it to be time to cover and bandage it already. More importantly, he needs it to be time to take a bath; they both reek of sex and mating pheromones.

"We're going to put people off from cake at the reception," Will had muttered as they dressed. He didn't miss how Hannibal had substituted the coordinating handkerchief with the first one Will ever gave him, but he chose not to mention it. "I really doubt that this little bundle of forget-me-nots is going to cover it up."

Hannibal attempted to wink at him in the mirror. "That is what scent blockers are for. I took the liberty of procuring some for us to use after the ceremony."

"But then you won't smell like me," and Will had actually pouted. Then they'd spent ten minutes scenting each other, not that they ever needed an excuse.

The terms take forever, but at long last, Will can take care of his mate. Beverly is an excellent scrub tech, handing him the antiseptic and the antibiotic ointment and some weird cream that will promote scarring. It seems unhygienic to Will; he'd much rather keep the bite fresh.

Hannibal had smiled when Will told him that. "Then the scars will merely be a map for you," he'd said.

Beverly gives him the square of gauze, and Will puts it over the wound. His hands are shaking, and Hannibal reaches up to steady them. Will kisses Hannibal's knuckles, moves his hand, and then kisses over the gauze.

In the audience, Mrs. Komeda sobs audibly, and Will can smell Hannibal's amusement.

Mischa brings Will the box; she holds it while he opens the lid, and then Will just stares at the contents. For most traditionally-mated omegas, the shield looks more like a collar, something out of a lurid novel, and Will had been terrified that was what Hannibal's would turn out to be. The predatory side Will hadn't known how to handle or embrace before Hannibal was entranced with the idea that the two of them would be the only ones to see the bite ever again--that it *belonged* to Will, and no one else. But a collar seemed more than wrong. Will was possessive, yes, but Hannibal was no possession.

This, however, is beautiful.

The shield reminds Will of the costumes he's seen at the handful of steampunk fashion shoots he's been present for. It buttons all the way from the pointed tip that will hit between Hannibal's collar bones to where the shield ends at the top of the throat. Tiny buttons, gold and pearl; button holes so tight that the shield could never be fastened without the help of a

button hook and a second person. It extends to a point at both shoulders, like a diamond of fabric.

Will takes it from the box, running his fingers over the soft gray silk, overlaid with gold lace, tinted with bits of blue. He hardly believes that he gets to put this on Hannibal, that he'll wear it every time he leaves the house, that--

That Hannibal will never wear a tie again.

It isn't just the bite that will be hidden. Hannibal's entire *throat* is ceded to Will.

He finally looks up from the garment in his hands and meets Hannibal's gaze, worried about what he will find there. Hannibal's eyes betray his social mask, as Will hoped they would, and Hannibal is unabashedly delighted.

Will feels like he's watching someone else's hands work as he sets it around Hannibal's neck. It's as though he's nothing more than a page to Hannibal's knight, an apprentice, learning from the master, dressing him for battle. Mischa hands him an antique button hook--he'd been right, after all--and Will sets to fastening it. The shield is tighter than he expected; Hannibal has impeccable posture, but this makes him hold his head higher, extend his neck further. A corset for his throat, and Will's the one who can barely breathe.

Hannibal's hands hold the sides of Will's face. He wipes Will's overwhelmed tears away with his thumbs, and Will's laugh is tremulous.

Biting his lip, attempting to concentrate, Will tucks the far corners of the shield underneath the shoulders of Hannibal's shirt. Beverly pries the button hook out of his hand, and Will can't stop adjusting Hannibal's waistcoat, and then his shirt, and then running his fingers along the buttons at Hannibal's throat.

"This is real," he says quietly. "I'm not hallucinating. Hannibal, this is real, right?"

Hannibal smiles--really smiles, in front of people who aren't Will, and maybe this is a hallucination, too--and takes his hand. "It's real, my perfect alpha."

Distantly, Will can hear the *snap* and *click* of Abigail's practice camera, the same one Will had taught himself to use so many years before. He elevates slightly to kiss Hannibal, one hand held, the other clasping the back of Hannibal's head, and wonders what will develop.

Chapter End Notes

And they all lived happily ever after, except for Freddie, who was served with an order to cease and desist after Will caught her hiding in the closet on their honeymoon. <3

ADDENDUM: Several of you have asked about it, so here is the inspiration for the mating shield.

End Notes

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Kudos and comments validate my existence. <3

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